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ABSTRACT

With increased emphasis on personal fulfillment in society, it seems that individuals must remain knowledgeable about the multidimensional aspects of career choice and vocational life. It is predicted that for people of all ages, career and life planning will continue to play an increasingly important role. A 13-step approach to career and life planning can serve as one model that is both practical and effective. The 13 steps of the model are the following: self-awareness, career personality profile, brainstorming career possibilities, settling on four careers, projecting four careers into the future, gathering job market information on four careers, asking important questions about the four careers, deciding on two tentative careers, developing a career desires profile, selecting a single career, preparing a resume, preparing for the employment interview, and, finally, preparing for subsequent careers. It is hoped that the decisions resulting from following this career and life planning model will contribute to self-realization.
(Author/KC)

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Process Approach to Career and Life Planning
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Abstract

With increased emphasis on personal fulfillment in society, it seems that individuals remain knowledgeable about the multidimensional aspects of career choice and vocational life. It is predicted that for people of all ages, Career and Life Planning will continue to play an increasingly important role. The authors propose that the 13 step approach to Career and Life Planning will serve as one model that is both practical and effective. Hopefully, the decisions resulting from Career and Life Planning will contribute to self-realization.

Process Approach to Career and Life Planning

During the past decade considerable attention has been directed toward the concept of career and life planning (Bachhuber & Harwood, 1978). Developing strategies for careers and life is not only important for high school and college students who must be cognizant of the changing job market, but also for adults who are willing to respond to the challenge of a changing need system as well as to emerging employment opportunities.

To assist individuals in career and life planning, various models and programs have been developed (Rubinton, 1980; Weissman & Krebs, 1976.). One such program has been in operation at The University of West Florida for the past ten years. During this period more than 1,800 students of all ages have completed a two quarter hour course entitled "Career and Life Planning." - To insure maximum individual participation most of the class time occurred in seven person groups with each group led by a trained facilitator (usually a University of West Florida graduate student). A similar design has been used successfully at the high school and junior college level, as well as with older adults and service retirees.

The model contains 13 basic developmental steps: Self-Awareness, Career Personality Profile, Brainstorming Career Possibilities, Settling on Four Careers, Projecting Four Careers into the Future, Gathering Job Market Information on Four Careers,

Asking Important Questions about Four Careers, Deciding on Two Tentative Careers, Developing a Career Desires Profile, Selecting One Career, Preparation of a Resume, Preparation for the Employment Interview, Preparing for Subsequent Careers. The 13 steps represent a process which can be used repeatedly throughout one's life. Moreover, the program is designed to be completed by individuals as well as groups.

This model makes three basic assumptions: (1) Every person has a multifaceted personality structure (Hollis & Hollis, 1976). In other words, each person has a variety of personalities that seek fulfillment. Most individual careers allow expression of only one or two of these personalities. (2) At various times in a person's life, one or the other of the personalities will become more dominant than the others. Individuals should recognize these internal desires and consider them in the choice of vocations and/or avocations. (3) People must foresake tradition and antiquated personal scripts that prevent change; they must have courage to stop what they are doing and to start something else (Kirn & Kirn, 1978). Changing careers or hobbies is the acceptable way to live rather than the exception. This is extremely important as a premise because it frees people to do what they want. This philosophy prevents people from being defensive about career fantasies, ideas, and plans that are different and new.

One last note prior to describing the model is that the materials required for Career and Life Planning are relatively inexpensive. Although standardized tests may be used, they are not necessary for effective Career and Life Planning.

THE MODEL

STEP 1: Self-Awareness

The first step in the model involves the participant gaining as much self-knowledge as possible (Weissman & Krebs, 1976). This is accomplished by a series of self-awareness activities such as the following:

- A. Write down seven or eight personality characteristics that you believe you have. The only rule of thumb is that 75% must be positive.
- B. Write down 12-15 activities that you have enjoyed within the past two years. What do the activities involve?
- C. Ask five different friends and relatives to describe you with any five or six adjectives.
- D. Make a list of all the people that you admire or hold in high regard. What is it about them that you admire or respect?
- E. Make a list of all the things you would like to do that you have never had the chance to do.

STEP 2: Career Personality Profile

Data from the self-awareness exercises are used to develop a career personality profile. Traits pertinent to potential careers are arranged in a hierarchial order of subjective importance. Figure I presents an example of a career personality profile.

Insert Figure I about here

The major personality needs must be congruent with career choices if the individual is to attain job satisfaction. Employment does not necessarily afford the opportunity to express major personality needs. Hobbies and extracurricular outlets can provide additional fulfillment.

STEP 3: Brainstorming Career Possibilities

Since experts estimate there are a minimum of 45,000 separate occupations from which to choose a career (Chapman, 1976), it is imperative that a person be as broad-minded as possible at this phase of the Career and Life Planning process.

Activity:

Spontaneously write down the first 10 career choices that come to your mind. For example, a typical list may include: Lounge owner, real estate appraiser, teacher, counselor, cowboy, professional golfer, business man, administrator of a home for the homeless, value clarifier, a football coach. Keep that list off to one side.

Now proceed more logically by selecting careers from some various areas of human enterprise:

- a. Education: Teacher, administrator, counselor, etc.
- b. Business: Manager, accountant, personnel director, etc.
- c. Communication: Newspaper writer, television announcer, etc.
- d. Psychology: Psychotherapist, counselor, researcher, etc.
- e. Medicine: Doctor, nurse, medical assistant, etc.

- f. Sports/leisure: Coach, recreational director, senior citizen director, etc.
- g. Clerical: Secretary, receptionist, clerk, etc.
- h. Systems Science: Programmer, system science analyst, etc.
- i. Environment: Biologist, conservationist, etc.
- j. Fine Arts: Commercial artist, actress/actor, musician, etc.
- k. Vocational-Technical: Welder, electrician, plumber, etc.

A comparison of the two career lists should stimulate the production of three or four career choices about which you feel strongly. One criterion may be that a particular career is very attractive.

At this stage the participant has the opportunity to obtain feedback on career choices from group members and/or relatives and friends. From the feedback activity the participant should be flexible enough to add related careers to the list.

STEP 4: Settling on Four Careers

The objective in this step is to narrow the careers generated in "Brainstorming" (Step 3) to four tentative career choices. This can be done by simply checking the sources (i.e., self, group, friends and relatives) and selecting the four careers identified by the greatest number of sources.

Obviously the participant takes responsibility for selecting the four careers on this list.

STEP 5: Projecting Four Careers Into the Future

The next step is to put the four careers through the Future Test. This is a subjective future in the sense that the person or group visualizes and/or verbalizes events likely to have occurred within the next ten years. The focus is on events that affect the world of work in general and individuals' careers in particular.

Activity: Newspaper, 1992.

Materials: Newsprint or other large paper, and magic markers.

This activity can be done alone or in small groups. Each individual group creates a front page of an imagined future newspaper. The directions are as follows:

Imagine the front page of a newspaper, January 1, 1992 that reviews principal events of the year. Imagine captions that pertain directly or indirectly to four careers. One example could be: "Teachers replaced by home computers." -

Groups may then compare newspapers. Individuals working alone may share the newspaper with a friend or relative. The net effect of the newspaper exercise is to test the future potential of career choices.

Activity: Future Self.

This exercise allows you to project yourself into the future.

"You can project yourself into the person you want to be in the future, to what you want to do, have what you want, and live the lifestyle you want" (Hollis & Hollis, 1976, pp. 247-248).

The directions are as follows:

Imagine a day in your life ten years from now. Just sit back and relax and write a paragraph. Include such data as family settings, type of employment, geographical location, and hobbies. Paragraphs may be shared in small groups or with other individuals.

The participant reflects on the significance of the correlation between Future Self and career choices.

Activity: Goal Setting.

The participant is instructed to write two long-term goals and two short-term goals.

Example:

- a. Long-Term Goal: To earn a Doctorate Degree in Psychology.
- b. Long-Term Goal: To have a savings of \$50,000.00.
- c. Short-Term Goal: Make a down payment on a house.
- d. Short-Term Goal: Find a part-time job in the helping professions.

Again the participant compares goals with career choices. Finally, the four tentative career choices are seriously weighed in the light of the Newspaper Exercise, Future Self and the Goal Setting Activity.

STEP 6: Gathering Job Market Information on Four Careers

Description and job market information is a very important step in the approach to career and life planning (Tolbert, 1974). Students use objective resources to discover advantages and disadvantages to specific careers in the following way:

Activities:

- a. Talk to a person in your career choices, preferably someone who has been in the career field over 10 years. Be sure to ask the person the advantages and disadvantages as he or she sees them.
- b. Read the Occupational Outlook Handbook. Most public libraries have this book.
- c. Find an establishment or organization where people in your four careers are employed. Contact a person in each career and ask if you can spend a typical working day with them.
- d. Do some volunteer work in your four careers to see if you will really enjoy working in that career field (Bush, 1969).
- e. Write to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington D.C., requesting the latest data and job outlook for your four career choices.
- f. If your career choices require higher education or special training, contact one or two available colleges, universities, or vocational schools to find out the requirements and cost to prepare yourself for the field.

- g. If you are considering a career with the armed services, county, state or federal governments, contact your local office and get first hand information on job descriptions, promotion, requirements, marketability and salary.

It is important to get as much information as possible from various sources concerning the descriptions, promotion, requirements, marketability and salary. This formal data should influence maintaining or eliminating career choices.

STEP 7: Asking Important Questions About the Four Careers

Participants are now ready to ask some important questions about their four career choices.

Activity:

First, ask yourself the question and then write it down. You should write at least 5 or 6 important questions concerning each of your career choices. For example, if one of your career choices is a guidance counselor, you might ask yourself "Will I be happy working with adolescents for the next 10 years?"

Only you will be able to resolve some of your questions while others may lend themselves to outside help. If you are working in a group situation on the approach to career and life planning, attempt to resolve your questions in trios or quartets. If you are working alone, discuss questions with friends and relatives.

The crucial purpose of Step 7 is to look at your career choices from every angle. Be the devil's advocate. Seek out others to get their ideas and opinions to help you resolve your

questions. They may point out something very important that you need to ask yourself.

STEP 8: Deciding on Two Tentative Careers

Students are now prepared to reduce the four career choices to two careers. This decision should be based on what the individual must have in a career to be satisfied. In other words, it is based on needs or those elements that are essential requirements for a career. This decision is naturally a subjective one and will differ from one individual to another.

Students should develop a list of minimum essential requirements for a career. Using the data collected in Steps 5, 6, and 7, all four tentative careers should be analyzed to see which careers meet the individual's minimum essential requirements.

STEP 9: Developing a Career Desires Profile

Developing a career desires profile helps students settle on a single preferred career. Desires or wants are those things in a career that are "nice to have" but not "essential" (Kepner & Tregoe, 1965).

The participant is instructed to make a list of desired characteristics for a career. Characteristics may relate, for example, to pay, job conditions, or opportunity. Once again the list will be subjective and will vary from individual to individual.

STEP 10: Selecting a Single Career

A participant is now instructed to decide on a single tentative career. Although this decision is based primarily on Step 2 (Career Personality Profile) and Step 9 (Career Desires Profile) all previous data must be considered. The person is simply giving priority to a specific career at this point in life (Chapman, 1976).

If a participant is not satisfied with the degree to which the careers are self-fulfilling, career choices can be expanded or narrowed to meet individual needs. Veterinarian could be combined with pet shop owner. Psychologist could be narrowed to drug therapist. Teacher could be expanded to school superintendent or principal. The key is to reevaluate the career chosen and change it to meet more of your personality and your career desires.

STEP 11: Preparation of a Resume

A resume is a summary of a person's education and experience. "It is designed to give a potential employer a quick "profile" needed to make a decision about whether or not to pursue an in-depth interview" (Chapman, 1978, p. 8). The following guidelines should be considered in developing a resume:

- a. State career objective at the beginning of the resume.
- b. While the same basic resume can be used to apply for different positions, the stated career goal should be tailored to the specific position for which you are

applying. This gives the impression you know what you want and where you are going and that you are the person best suited for the position.

- c. In relating educational history, list grade point average if it is impressive.
- d. Insert strongest points in the beginning of the resume.
- e. Action verbs like supervised or directed are effective in communicating a sense of responsibility.
- f. Before submitting a resume have two or three people read it for grammar, spelling, and first impressions.
- g. Include a resume cover letter. This is an opportunity to suggest in a subtle way that you have the qualifications to add to the organization.
- h. List outstanding achievements, awards, and commendations.
- i. Be positive in your resume. Do not include negative data.

STEP 12: Preparation for the Employment Interview

The interview is usually the first face to face contact the employer has with potential employees. Your objective in the interview is to show the potential employer "how your skills can help them solve their problems" (Bolles, 1977, p. 139). The following guidelines may be helpful in preparing for the interview:

- a. Before the interview learn as much as possible about the company/organization/place for which you are interviewing.

- b. Attempt to find out all you can about the interviewer, e.g., position within the corporation, likes and dislikes, etc., so that you can capitalize on your similarities with him or her.
- c. Anticipate questions the interviewer might ask before going to the interviewer. Have an idea in mind as to how you might answer them.
- d. Practice interpersonal skills like listening, attention, eye contact.
- e. Rehearse the interview with a friend/acquaintance.
- f. Be on time.
- g. Be well groomed.
- h. Feel positive about your abilities, chances of success.
- i. Be relaxed and be yourself.
- j. Be sure you understand the question being asked.
- k. Most important, "Sell Yourself" during the interview!
Your objective in the interview is to make the interviewer believe by the time you leave that the organization could benefit by hiring you.

STEP 13: Preparing for Subsequent Careers

New employees are encouraged to continue preparations for an everchanging future. The individual should keep abreast of societal changes that may affect present existing careers and create new careers. Think ahead to where you might want to be ten years from now.

Periodically check your personality profile (at least once every 2-3 years). Are the same personality traits still dominant? Is your present career allowing you to express your personality as much as it did 2-3 years ago? Preparing for your next career will keep your career personality fulfilled.

SUMMARY

The 13 steps to the Career and Life Planning process are intended to be repeated as often as desired by participants. Hopefully, the decisions resulting from Career and Life Planning will contribute to the self-actualization process.

With increased emphasis on personal fulfillment in society, it is important that individuals stay in touch with specific aspects of careers that are rewarding. This means that individuals must maintain an awareness level of "Who am I?" and how this self-knowledge is expressed in employment situations.

Moreover, an increasing number of employers are emphasizing career development within their organization. This career development is intended to maintain employee morale and longevity with the company.

It is predicted that for people of all ages, Career and Life Planning will continue to play an increasingly important role. The authors propose that the 13 Step approach to Career and Life Planning will serve as one model that is both practical and effective.

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Footnotes

This model is based on data obtained from Career and Life Planning courses and workshops over the past ten years at the University of West Florida.

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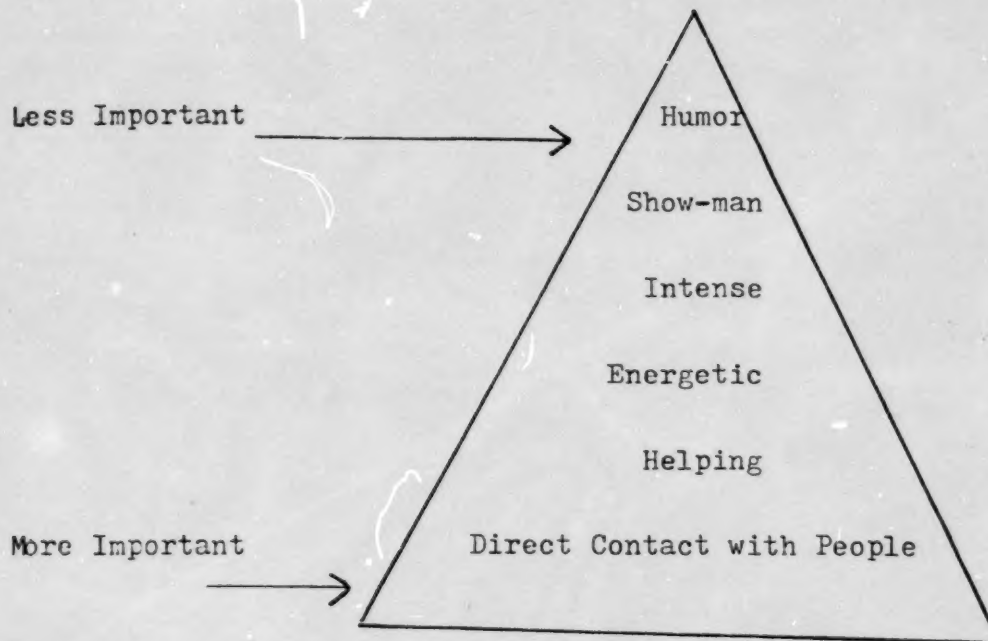


Figure I
Career Personality Profile